

Follow Freeman!

by Pisces

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Summary: Series of drabbles. Aperture Science wants to give Gordon cake.

1. Follow Freeman! Dental Plan

Dental Plan****

_Summary: "You get dental with that?"

> _Rating: K

> _Disclaimer: Half-Life and it's world belongs to Valve.

> _Characters: Gordon Freeman and Barney Calhoun

> _More Notes: Just a place to throw any of my Half-Life drabbles I deem not _too_ full of crack. I've fallen in love with the world of Half-Life. How can I have such rabid fangirl-age for a guy that's never spoken and I've never seen in action?_

"Ya know, Doc, you've aged surprisingly well."

Gordon carefully slide an oiled rag along the inside of his disassembled .357 Magnum barrel. "Hm?"

"You don't look one bit different than I remember you looking fifteen years ago. What's your secret?"

Gordon drew his brows together in thought. "Get yourself put into stasis by a most-likely-not-human briefcase wielding man who wants to contract you out as a living weapon to the highest bidder."

Barney blinked. That had been a lot of words. "Oh. You get dental with that?"

"No."

"Well then, I think I'll stick with what I got. Pass me that rag?"

Gordon did.

And Barney never brought that subject up again.

2. Follow Freeman! Why Don't You Come Down

**Why Don't You Come Down Instead?**

_Summary: Alyx hears Gordon curse for the first time.

> _Rating: T

> _Disclaimer: Not mine, Valve and shit.

> _Characters: Gordon Freeman and Alyx Vance

> _More Notes: Much love for the morphine._

The floor cracked, and Gordon's orange clad form disappeared from view.

Alyx stifled a gasp. "Gordon?!" She took a cautious step towards the newly formed hole, listening intently to the silence below.

The distinctive moan of a zombie was followed barely a second behind by the equally distinctive blast of Gordon's shotgun. Loud sounds of combat echoed painfully in the confines of the decrepit building-

"_...minor lacerations detected..."_

-the splintering of wood, meaty thuds against armored metal-

"_...administering morphine..."_

-and the chittering squeal of a venomous headcrab.

"_...warning, blood toxin levels detected... antitoxin administered..."_

Alyx scrambled for the edge, ignoring the ominous creaking of the floorboards beneath her.

"_...warning, life signs critical... user death emanate..."_

"Gordon!"

She reached the jagged lip just as the last gunshot fired, the tinkle of spent shells hitting the floor loud in the sudden quiet. She poked her head over just in time to see Gordon give an already obviously dead headcrab a vicious whack with his crowbar. The little creature went skidding into a corner, trailing a smear of discolored blood.

"Fuck!" Gordon glanced up, glasses slightly askew, a new scratch along his cheek, but otherwise no worse for wear. "I fucking hate venomous headcrabs."

"Uh..." Alyx blinked rapidly, taken aback. "You're alright then?"

Gordon nodded, using a forefinger to push his glasses further up onto the bridge of his nose.

"...You sure? Cause that's an awful lot of dead zombie bodies down there."

Gordon cocked an eyebrow.

"Yeah, okay, no need to get snippy with me." Laughing lightly at her own little joke (Gordon was the most easygoing person she had ever met, or perhaps just the least vocal.), Alyx settled back on her heels, letting her arms rest on her knees. "I'll just wait here while you find your way back up?"

Gordon sighed, and got to work.

3. Follow Freeman! New Toy

New Toy****

_Summary: A guy's gotta find enjoyment from something.

> _Rating: K+

> _Disclaimer: Valve? Yeah.

> _Characters: Random Combine soldier and Gordon Freeman

> _More Notes: The last line is a bit _meh_. But hitting people with energy orbs really was quite a bit of fun._

The Combine soldier's footsteps thundered hollowly along one of the many metal walkways that occupied City 17's monolithic Citadel, the com in his helmet squawking with constant updating information.

They were being invaded?

The Citadel?

By _one man?_

How was the even possible?

...This Freeman thing was getting out of hand.

The soldier rounded a corner, heading to meet up with his squad in the sector Freeman was last reported seen, and ran straight into Gordon Freeman himself.

He'd like to say he reacted admirably, but all he really did was stumble back in shock.

He's shorter then I thought he would be.

The large gun in Freeman's hands came to bear on his head.

The soldier cringed.

And that was the only thing that kept his head from being taken clean off as an energy orb flew mere inches from his helmeted ear, to settle hovering directly in front of the barrel of Freeman's gun.

The both stared at it, the soldier in perplexity, Freeman with the same bland apathy he had worn since entering the room.

But then Freeman grinned, and the soldier was amazed that a man with such thick glasses could look so disturbing. "Oh look, a new toy."

And _then_ Freeman's new toy took off his head.

4. Follow Freeman! A Race?

**A Race?**

_Summary: "Hey â€" an airduct. I've heard stories about you and airducts. Dr. Kleiner says whenever he locked himself out of his office, you and Barney use to compete to see who could get in fastest without using a key."

> _Rating: K

> _Disclaimer: Say 'yes' to Valve.

> _Characters: Gordon Freeman, Barney Calhoun, Isaac Kleiner, and Alyx Vance

> _More Notes: Was suppose to be, like, 100 words, but kept on going. Kleiner is the awesomeness. Oh, by the way, 'fiddlesticks'? The most awesome exclamation ever._

"Oh fiddlesticks, I've locked my keys in my office again."

Down the hall, security officer Barney Calhoun paused, eying the fretting Dr. Isaac Kleiner in an odd sort of eager anticipation.

Rounding the opposite corner, Dr. Gordon Freeman stopped as well, green gaze lighting on Kleiner before flickering up to settle on the security officer.

Their eyes meet, and the race was on.

Barney strode purposefully down the hallway, carefully but firmly grasping Dr. Kleiner's elbow and guiding him out of the way of the locked door.

"Oh my, Barney, I'm glad you're here." Kleiner readjusted his thick glasses in a jerky, habitual movement. "I seem to have locked myself out of-"

"I heard ya, Doc." Barney planted his hands on his hips and sized up the door. The blinds were shut on the large picture window just to the left, hiding the view of the office, and the set of keys laying on a somewhat cluttered desk, within. "I got everything under control."

"Well, then, shouldn't you go retrieve the master key-"

"I got something better, Doc." Barney turned around, grinning as he pulled something small and metallic out of his pocket.

"Ah!" Kleiner's exclamation conveyed his delight at the bent piece of metal the security officer was brandish as if it were a weapon of biblical proportions. "I did not realize you were a locksmith of any

skill, Barney!"

"Well..." Barney lowered the lockpick slightly. "I've never...
actually done it before. But I've read about how on the internet!"
He took a deep breath, kneeled and got to work.

Around the corner and out of sight, Gordon Freeman had pulled a screwdriver from one of the many pockets on his white lab coat and set about removing the grating covering an air vent near the ceiling. Loose screws were stored safely in the folds of his coat along with the screwdriver, the grating leaning carefully against the wall. With a small hop and a quick heave with his arms, Gordon pulled himself up and in the now accessible ventilation duct.

Back at the locked door itself, Barney was getting nowhere fast.

"There's suppose to be a, a _click _and something to do with a plug..." He rocked back on his heels, resting his forearms on his knees. "What the hell is a plug, anyway?"

"Barney," There was a pause as Kleiner fidgeted with his glasses once more. "May I see your lockpick?"

Barney sighed before pushing himself to his feet. "Sure, Doc. Why not? You couldn't possibly do worse then I am."

Within the office, a few hard kicks made short work of the grating, sending it flying into the small room with a clatter only seconds before Gordon's thin frame followed after it, landing on the carpet below in a soft crouch. A cursory sweep of the room located the keys easily, which he picked up just before the previously locked door swung inward.

Standing in the doorway, Barney transferred his incredulous glare from the jubilant Dr. Kleiner to the rather dusty Dr. Freeman, who presented the keyring hanging off of one long finger.

--

"...and that's how I learned to pick locks."

Alyx gaped. "Dr. _Kleiner?"_

"Yeah. After that, I got curious, and had the doc show me how it was done." Barney settled himself more comfortably against the inside wall of the cargo truck, hand laying loosely on the MP7 machine gun leaning at his side. "Course, Gordon always did like the direct approach."

Gordon let his eyes slide off the passing scenery, glancing at Barney before going back his job as lookout. "Quicker."

"But not quieter. You never were very good at being subtle."

Gordon flashed his old friend one of his rare, faint smiles. Alyx hide her giggle behind a hand.

Dr. Kleiner tsked from near the front of the truck. "I made him pay for the damages incurred to my office's ventilation grate."

Alyx gasped, fighting between shock and amusement. "You didn't!"

Kleiner nodded. "I did."

Gordon shrugged. "He did."

This time Alyx couldn't hide her laughter.

5. Follow Freeman! Hero's Luck

Hero's Luck****

_Summary: Oh look, this is going to be easy. Hah! Gotcha!

> _Rating: K+

> _Disclaimer: Valve, and I can't keep being witty, if I was even witty to begin with.

> _Characters: Gordon Freeman, Barney Calhoun, Alyx Vance, and Random Resistance Member (RRM)

> _More Notes: Worst. Luck. Ever. I can't be the only one who noticed this. Hey Alyx, we made it out of the evil zombie infested death pit of darkness, but... oh look! The gate won't open! Imagine that! What, you expected it too right off? You haven't been in this hero gig very long, have you?_

"How's things coming along?"

The resistance member turned slightly, glancing over his shoulder. "Oh, Mr. Calhoun, Ms. Vance! The last truck load of refugees is currently being ferried over the ravine as we speak. Once they're safely on the other side, we'll send the last of the soldiers over and the covey can be on its way."

"Uh, yeah... about that..." Barney ran a hand along the back of his neck, short graying hair spiking up in the harsh wind. "There's, uhm... there's a problem."

"A problem?"

Alyx and Barney exchanged quick looks.

"It's Gordon."

A few feet away, leaning against a truck bumper and counting his ammunition stock, the current topic subject lifted his head.

"Dr. Freeman?" The resistance soldier's brow furrowed. "Is something wrong with him?"

Once more, the two friends shared looks.

"It's not him." This time, Alyx spoke. "It's the gondola."

"There's nothing wrong with the gondola. We've used it several_"

"Doesn't matter." Alyx shook her head. "It's mechanical, that's all

that matters."

"What does it being mechanical have anything...?"

Barney sighed, sneaking a glance back at the seated Freeman. Gordon himself wore a look of resigned indifference.

"Everything. Anything Gordon has to use to get somewhere, if it's mechanical, there's a high chance it'll either fail or blow up."

"What?!" The soldier was skeptical, and rightly so. "That's preposterous."

Alyx shrugged helplessly. "It's true."

"But how does he get anywhere?"

Gordon pushed off the bumper, shouldering the strap of his submachine gun and coming to stand at Barney's side. "Very slowly or very quick indeed."

The soldier's expression warred between instinctual messianic adoration and intense skepticism. "So what do you want me to do, if he has this supposed curse?"

"Look, we'll just go first, and Gordon can come across on his own afterwards." Neither Barney nor Alyx looked or sounded too enthusiastic about it though.

"But-"

"I'll make it," Gordon shrugged. "or I won't."

The resistance member pursed his lips, before finally sighing. "Well, if you say so. Alright men, load up! We're heading out!"

All around, men and women picked up their firearms and complied.

Alyx shot Gordon a sympathetic smile before trotting off.

"Well, buddy, hate to leave you like this." Barney took a backwards step towards the ravine edge and the awaiting gondola. "See ya on the other side, yeah?"

Gordon gave a small wave and settled back to wait for his turn.

The gondola made it across without incident, as was expected.

Freeman's turn.

Gordon stepped onto the large, flat, suspended platform, and pressed the activation button. About a third of the way across, it shuddered to a halt.

On the other side of the gorge, the resistance soldier shielded his eyes from the sun with a hand, peering at the distant gondola car. Surprise colored his voice. "Well, I'll

be-

BOOM!

"_Shit!"_

Barney and Alyx cringed.

"Guess he got both of them this time." Alyx planted her hands on her hips, shaking her head.

The soldier watched the flaming wreckage slam into the opposite cliff face in shock. "Is he alright?"

"He... he should be fine." Barney eyeballed the wreckage. "I think. Come on, lets gather up the people and move on. He'll catch up."

Back in the ravine and about thirty feet down, Gordon Freeman clung to the rock wall, gloved fingers dug into a thin crevice, booted feet toeing a narrow lip. He laid his forehead against the cool stone, letting out a small sigh, before, well... getting to work.

6. Follow Freeman! Thanks For All The Fish

**Thanks For All The Fish**

_Summary: Thanks are given, but unfortunately, no fish are involved.

> _Rating: K

> _Disclaimer: Â©, Valve.

> _Characters: Gordon Freeman, vortigaunts, and mention of Alyx Vance

> _More Notes: Kinda for earthrise. I've always wanted to do something dealing with the vortigaunt incident at the beginning of Episode One. Slight Gordon/Alyx. Where are they? I dunno. Doesn't matter. Uh... that arctic base? Whatever. Why is it cold? It's cold in my computer room. I'm full of deep thoughts.

> _I like doing these Gordon POV things. And vortigaunt conversations are fun! One bit of line is a vortigaunt quote right out of the game, cause I'm a complete dork like that._

The night was cold, and resistance members huddled around a tiny space heater.

Gordon Freeman sat in a corner though, away from the crowd, watching the doorway and waiting for exhaustion to set in so he could pass out for the night. His muscles were tense with battle fatigue.

To his right, a pair of vortigaunts conversed in their croaking chants.

It was amazing how easy it was to get over the urge to shoot them on sight.

Of course, it was also amazing how easy it was to gain that habit in the first place.

Easily adaptable? Yeah, that's him.

He rose to his feet, hunkering down in his borrowed oversized sweater. The vortigaunts grew silent, bobbing their heads respectfully at his passing. He paused, eying them both.

"Thank you," he said, to them, at them, didn't really matter either way.

And of course the vortigaunts understood. "The Freeman has nothing to be thankful for. We did what we must. We owe much, and have little with which to repay."

"For a moment, the Freeman was one with the vortessence. And from then on, it is as thus you shall forever be. We call you 'sibling', although your mind and meaning are a mystery to us."

"We shall stand beside you for all eternity."

The background drum of conversation chattered on. Gordon was silent.

"I meant for Alyx." Gordon clenched at the hem of his long sleeves with tight fists. "Thank you for saving... Alyx."

A vortigaunt tapped its fingers together, humming deep in its throat. "The Alyx Vance is... important to the Freeman. You are most welcome."

Gordon nodded, and continued on out of the room.

7. Follow Freeman! Brand of Insanity Pt 1

**Brand Of Insanity; Pt. 1**

_Summary: Not all insanity is obvious at first glance.

> _Rating: K+

> _Disclaimer: Â©, Valve.

> _Characters: Overwatch squad members E349, E376, E324 & E357, and Gordon Freeman

> _More Notes: Banter FTW!_

"What's he doing now?"

E349 rose slightly from his crouch, peeking into a gap between the planks barring up the window. "He's stacked up some boxes, looks like he's going to- yeah, yeah, he's jumped up onto one of the cabinets."

E376 and E324 exchanged glances. E349 shuffled a bit, getting a better footing and trying to be as silent as possible.

"Okay, now he's gotten onto the rafters â€" somehow â€" and now he's... he found Jim's hidden stash of armor and ammunition!"

"E357." E376 interjected.

"What?"

"E357."

Underneath his mask, E349 rolled his eyes. "Jim, E357, whatever. Doesn't matter anyway, he's dead now."

"What's he doing now?" E324 piped up, his whisper transformed into a harsh crackle by his built in voice modifier.

"Yeah, uh- he seems to be breaking anything wooden into pieces with a... crowbar?" E349 paused. "_Very_ tiny pieces."

"Huh."

"Yeah." E349 ducked back safely out of view of the window. The other two huddled around him.

"That's... weird."

"Yeah."

"So... who's going in there first?"

"Are you kidding me? Did you _see_ what he did to Jim-"

E376 cleared his throat.

"-_E357_? That was just with a mattress and, and a wooden _chair!_"_

"Look on the bright side, he's probably destroyed the wooden chair by now."

E324 could practically feel E349's glare, even if he couldn't see it.

"Either way, we're going to have to form a real airtight plan before we take him on. Taking him by surprise will be _crucial_-"

The window above their heads exploded outwards, wood splintering under the force of a descending crowbar. A gloved hand was thrust through the shattered glass right after, opening up and dropping something round and beeping.

The three stared at it-

"Grenade!"

"_Shit!_"_

-before scattering.

8. Follow Freeman! I Don't Need A Hero, But

**I Don't Need A Hero, But...**

_Summary: Alyx's first impression of Gordon Freeman.

> _Rating: K

> _Disclaimer: Â©, Valve.

> _Characters: Alyx Vance and Gordon Freeman

> _More Notes: Was going to be much longer, but the line at the end was too good _not_ to be the end. By the way, thanks for the reviews!_

Alyx wasn't quite sure what she had been expecting when she received the somewhat frantic call from Barney, so she wasn't quite sure if this _wasn't_ it or not.

She had some vague fuzzy images of a Dr. Gordon Freeman from when she lived in Black Mesa with her father and mother as a child. He had been tall then, as all adults had been tall, and he had worn glasses, as all scientists had worn glasses. Except for her dad, of course, because he was special.

Beyond that, she only remembered quiet and kindness.

But after the Earth-changing event fifteen years past, all she had heard growing up were stories of the amazing Gordon Freeman's exploits. He had literally been her childhood hero.

The man following behind her was quiet, yes, hadn't said a word besides a faint 'thank you'. The man behind her wore glasses, yes, but he wasn't exceptionally tall, barely raising an inch higher than her own height.

But did he really seem like hero material? No, not really.

Did she really mind? No, not really.

Besides, he was kinda cute.

Alyx didn't need a hero anyway. She grew up, she takes care of that herself.

But she could really use a boyfriend.

9. Follow Freeman! Title Unknown

**Title Unknown**

_Summary: Stuck in an airlock?

> _Rating: K

> _Disclaimer: Â©, Valve.

> _Characters: Gordon Freeman and Judith Mossman

> _More Notes: My first Mossman! She's interesting. She has the ability to make me want to shoot her just _straight_ in the face whenever I see her for the first time in a play through, yet she's still understandable in her actions. Yum for well-rounded character creation. I always thought Mossman seemed vaguely nervous around Freeman. Anywho, fear my amazing lack of creativity on the title._

"Well, Dr. Freeman, looks like the airlock is stuck in mid-cycle."

Gordon sneezed.

"It seems that the power surge that rebooted the computers has messed with the scanning program. It won't restart because it believes it's

still scanning, yet it won't open the doors because of the very same reason."

Gordon sneezed again, politely and off to the side of the tiny monitor showcasing Judith Mossman's face.

"We'll work on it from our end. How about you try to find a way out from within there?"

Gordon raised an eyebrow, scrunching up his nose to resist sneezing for a third time.

"Good luck, Dr. Freeman. We'll hopefully see you very soon."

The screen went blank.

Gordon blinked, glancing around at the bare walls.

Yeah, I'll get right on that...

-Three Hours Later-

The airlock doors split open with a hiss, stuttered, then slide open completely. Mossman stuck her head through, hands clasped, and was quite surprised to find Gordon napping in a corner.

"Dr. Freeman! You're... you're still here?"

Gordon cracked an eyelid. "I have a cold."

"Yes, but-"

"Do you see any convenient airvents in here?"

"Ah..."

Gordon cocked an eyebrow.

"Yes, well..." Mossman wrung her hands a bit. "We've gotten the doors working and the system as been reset."

Gordon sneezed.

The female scientist took a step backwards. "Lunch is ready?"

Gordon sighed, voice hoarse. "Thank you, Dr. Mossman, that will be all."

Judith fled.

10. Follow Freeman! Taking Dog For A Walk

**Taking Dog For A Walk**

_Summary: And this is how you take your dog for a walk... if he happens to be a 10 foot tall killer robot.

> _Rating: K+? Yeah, that works.

> _Disclaimer: Â©, Valve.

> _Characters: Gordon Freeman and Dog

> _More Notes: Okay, this was amazingly fun to write. Basically just Gordon and Dog kicking ass all over the place. Damn. And earthrise, you leave some great reviews. Have some Dog._

Travel by way of Dog wasn't that bad a way at all.

Seated in a nook created by Dog's overly large hand and solid midsection, Gordon let himself jounce along with the loping gallop Dog had adopted. Woodland scenery flashed by, tree limbs slapping against Dog's scrap-formed hide with metallic thunks.

Any Combine they encountered were dealt with swiftly and without preamble.

Dog hardly paused. Gordon calculated distance and trajectory with near unheard of swiftness, delivering short bursts of pulse rifle fire with his customary deadly accuracy from within the safety of Dog's armored bulk.

A robotic scream rent the forest air, followed closely by loud hum. Dog's sizable form was bathed in pure white light.

Gordon glanced up through the leaf cover. "Move!"

And move Dog did. The robot's next stride covered near thirty feet. Gordon clung to Dog's shoulder plate for support.

The ground behind them cratered in an explosive burst of light. The strider sent out another scream, leg piercing the ground as it turned, eye " and mounted guns " swinging in their direction. The Combine soldiers scattered at its feet opened fire.

Dog roared in retaliation.

Gordon let down an arc of suppressive fire while Dog charged forward, his empty hand grabbing up the nearest Combine and chucking him, screaming, into a group of his fellow soldiers. The strider ducked low beneath the height of the trees, its own pulse gun thudding powerfully as it tried to follow Dog's quick sprint.

Dog skidded for a turn, chunks of grass and dirt tearing underneath his massive feet, but a tug from Freeman upon one of the three flaps that formed his head made him pause. Raising an arm to shield his human charge, Dog glanced down.

An almost nonexistent smile graced Freeman's narrow features, his soft voice almost inaudible over the sound of bullets ricocheting off of Dog's metal plating. "Dog, throw."

Dog chirped in reply, head bobbing enthusiastically.

Rearing up to his full impressive height, Dog cocked his arm back, Freeman balanced in a low crouch on his palm, gloved hand laying lightly on the material that composed up Dog's equivalent to a thumb. With another mighty roar, Dog threw.

The chatter from the Combine radios grew much more pronounced.

Freeman arched high into the air, reaching out to snag the joint

where one of its legs joined together with it's beetle-like shell. His arm socket jolted painfully, boots scrambling for purchase on the strider's smooth skin.

The strider screamed again, lifting itself above the treetops again in confusion.

Gordon squinted against the sudden full-on sunlight. Down below and out of sight, sounds of mayhem Dog was no doubt causing could still be heard. Latching his left hand on the nearest handhold, planting his feet firmly on the nearest nearly flat surface he could find, Gordon opened up his pulse rifle point blank of the inner workings of the strider's main body.

About twenty rounds later, a sizable hole had been torn open. Gordon slung his pulse rifle behind his back, struggling to keep his perch as the strider bucked angrily, and unclipped a grenade from his belt. The pin was pulled and tossed into the hole.

Freeman climbed for higher ground, sliding dangerously along atop the strider's head.

Five seconds later, the strider's insides exploded.

It let out a low robotic moan as it collapsed sideways, taking a few trees out with it and long spindly legs folding underneath itself. Gordon hung on as long as he could, before leaping " hopefully " clear of the crash site. He landed on a tilting tree trunk, scrambling his way down its length before coming to a rest in a cushioning crouch on solid ground.

Dog came bounding to his side once the deafening calamity had settled, proudly displaying the body of the last dead Combine in his hand.

Freeman stood, giving himself a vague dusting. He eyed the presented soldier, before taking a few plugs out of the Combine's ammo pouch and loading them into his own gun. Nodding to himself, he gave Dog a pat on his giant forearm. "Come, Dog. Let's go meet up with Alyx and the rest."

Dog whined happily in agreement.

11. Follow Freeman! Just Want Some Ace

****Just Want Some Ace Bandages****

Summary: High pain tolerance, or hopped up on morphine. Or perhaps both!

> Rating: K+

> Disclaimer: Â©, Valve.

> Characters: Gordon Freeman, Barney Calhoun, and Eli Vance

> More Notes: Broken bones and severe impact trauma don't just disappear with a few magical medkits. Gordon either has some extremely high pain tolerance, or spends most of the time hopped up on morphine. Or perhaps it's both.

> Barney and Gordon interaction for the win! (Gasp! I wrote it out! Sacrilege. God, I need to sleep.) And apparently my favorite expression for Gordon is the raised eyebrow._

"Heya Doc, wanna grab a bite to - Jesus Christ Gordon, what the hell is _that?!"_

Gordon Freeman paused, shutting the door he had just emerged from and turning to glance down the hallway. He cocked an inquisitive eyebrow at Barney's mildly shocked expression.

Barney hurried the last few steps to Gordon's side, gripping his friend's thin shoulder and using his other hand to tug at the high collar of Gordon's borrowed shirt. "This!"

The other eyebrow rose to match the first.

Barney snorted. "Not the shirt- _that._" The older man gestured at the scientist's neck, and the rather nasty ring of bruises uncovered there.

"Ah." Gordon raised one long fingered hand to lightly touch the discoloration. "Barnacle." He shrugged.

Calhoun narrowed his eyes, sweeping his gaze from the bruising up to meet Gordon's calm green, and back down again. After a moment, he released his hold and took a step back, placing his hands on his hips with a sigh. "Alright, whatever. Let's get something to eat. This is the first time we've gotten you out of that HEV suit since this thing started, so let's make the best of it, yeah?"

Gordon smiled faintly, but couldn't quite repress an instinctive flinch as Barney tugged on his wrist impatiently.

Barney let go as if burned, before snatching it back up with equal swiftness. Shoving up the long sleeve, he revealed another set of bruises standing in stark contrast to pale skin around a bony wrist. The former security officer frowned. "And this?"

"Ah." Gordon studied it as if it were a science specimen. "Zombie, I believe."

"Lift up your shirt." Barney demanded.

Freeman gave a resigned sigh, and did as he was told.

"_Jesus_ Gordon." Barney was definitely angry now.

A multitude of bruises marred Gordon's torso, ugly shades of mottled yellow, purple and blues.

"Care to explain those?"

"One of those rather large antlions."

"_Damnit_ Doc, why didn't you tell anyone?"

"I was about to. I couldn't find any ace bandages for my ankle. I believe it might be sprained."

Barney stared.

Gordon stared back, shifting his weight slightly to one foot. "May I

put my shirt back on? It's a bit chilly in here."

"You-" Barney choked off the rest of what he was about to say, instead visibly reigning in his emotions with a deep calming breath. "I'm taking you to see Dr. Vance."

Gordon paused as he lowered the bottom hem of his shirt, before continuing on at a much slower pace. He nodded in assent.

"Good, cause I was gonna crack you in the head with your own crowbar and drag you there if I had to." He turned on a heel, striding purposefully down the hallway. Gordon followed after at a much more sedated pace, and with a slight limp.

--

The double doors leading to Black Mesa East's main lab slide open, emitting the two men inside.

Eli Vance half turned in his chair to greet them, keeping one eye upon his computer readouts. "Ah, Barney, Gordon! Anything I can do for you gentlemen?"

Oddly enough, Gordon spoke first. "Do you have any ace bandages?"

"Gah!" Throwing his hands up in the air, Barney turned and march right back out the doors he had just come through.

Gordon blinked.

Eli swiveled his chair to fully face Freeman, weathered brow furrowed. "Is something wrong?"

Gordon shrugged.

"Huh..." Eli gazed at the now closed doors. "What did you need those ace bandages for?"

Gordon sighed, and hoped Dr. Vance would react a little better then Barney had.

12. Follow Freeman! The Bringer Of Salvation

**The Bringer Of Salvation Through Destruction**

_Summary: A little break at the Ravenholm church.

> _Rating: K+

> _Disclaimer: Â©, Valve.

> _Characters: Gordon Freeman and Father Grigori

> _More Notes: I like this one! Some fun with a little play on Breen's words by Grigori._

Freeman blinked slowly, the distinctive smell of rotting flesh wafting in the air. At his side lay a half-finished simple sandwich. The half he had managed to choke down had been tasteless.

He tried not to think too hard.

Not because if he dwelt on it, he would realize these mindless zombies had once been human, but because if he thought too hard, he would realize that they weren't human to him, and never had been. They were monsters, enemies, another obstacle in his path to be dealt with.

He had to wonder if that made him heartless. He hoped not.

He liked to think of it as a... necessary mind set.

They were piled up on each other, pressed against the chain link fence surrounding the Ravenholm church. They howled at him, barely twenty feet away and impossibly out of reach.

One in particular stood out among the faceless crowd. It was tiny, not even half the size of those surrounding, its headcrab covering not only its head, but most of its shoulders as well. It use to be a child.

"That... is Annabelle."

Gordon glanced at Father Grigori out of the corner of his eye.

The self-proclaimed priest took a seat next to Freeman on the large crate pushed up against the church wall. "She was a precious child, one of the only few born these past few years. She would have turned seven last month." He sighed, rubbing a hand along his bald scalp. "She is a constant reminder of my weakness, that I have not fully devoted myself to the Lord's work. I... cannot bring myself to release her soul to the Light."

Freeman remained silent, watching as the little figure finally pushed its arms through the holes in the fencing.

"You have really stirred up my flock, brother! They usually don't wander so close, for this is hallowed ground." Grigori leaned forward, elbows resting on his knees and thick hands clasped together. "They smell death upon you, brother, and seek salvation from it."

Grigori stood. Freeman tilted his head to keep both him and the small zombie in view.

The priest gestured wide, encompassing the swarm that was now behind him. "With your destruction, you create freedom! You must always remember that, my brother. I pray for your safety, as well as your success in bringing us all salvation."

Freeman slowly pushed himself off his box perch, walking past Grigori without a word. The stout priest watched him go, following his progress across the open grass. Flood lights illuminated the churchyard, cutting stark shadows in the nights darkness.

He stopped just out of reach of the zombie child's elongated claw-like hands. This close, its high pitched keening was audible over the other screams, its headcrab pressed up against the fence by the zombies behind it with enough force to cause it to bulge through the links.

Gordon stared at it, before pulling out his pistol from its hip

holster. He checked the safety, he checked his ammo, slide the clip back in place (All the while, his auburn hair shone in the harsh white lighting with a red sheen, the tattered and decomposing remains of what was once a dress fluttered in a faint breeze off of tiny emancipated arms.), took a step forward and placed the end of the barrel firmly against the child-sized zombie's headcrab.

Its cries increased in intensity, unnaturally long fingers grasping for purchase around the wrist cuff of the HEV suit. The corners of Freeman's mouth were set hard.

"Freedom, huh, Annabelle?" he whispered, and pulled the trigger.

13. Follow Freeman! Eccentric Qualities

**Eccentric Qualities**

_Summary: Things explode.

> _Rating: K+

> _Disclaimer: Â©, Valve.

> _Characters: Alyx Vance, Barney Calhoun, Eli Vance, Gordon Freeman, and Issac Kleiner

> _More Notes: Ah, the holidays. Busy, busy. Anywho, you don't get to see much of the scientific side of Gordon Freeman, so we don't really know how he was at it. I always thought it would be humorous if he had picked up some of Kleiner's 'eccentric' habits when it came to science._

"This is... vaguely frightening."

"Oh yeah, I told ya." Barney folded his arms across his chest, leaning back against the wall. "When I heard that Dr. Kleiner and Gordon were going to work on the thing-

"Entanglement based teleportation device by induction through nonlinear transuranic crystals."

"Yeah, the thing-"

Alyx stifled her laughter.

"-together, well... that fire extinguisher has been strategically placed for easy access."

The young woman raised an eyebrow. "You can't be serious."

Across the large lab room, sparks flew, Kleiner let out a startled yelp, and Gordon quickly backed away, pushing the old man behind him.

"Woah!" Alyx recoiled reflexively. "Maybe you are serious."

"Gordon gained a reputation in the six months he worked at Black Mesa before the, uh, 'incident'. Don't get me wrong, as far as I've been told, they're both brilliant scientists, but together, Gordon's bad luck and Dr. Kleiner's absentmindedness compound to create this, this destructive force that goes against all laws of nature."

"Destructive force, huh?"

"Yeah. Luckily, they seem to be immune. Everything around them, though," Here he shook his head. "Ain't so lucky."

"You're full of shit sometimes, you know that Barney?"

"Alyx!"

They both looked to the left.

Eli Vance pushed open the elevator fencing, limping into the room with his distinctive off-beat footsteps. His weathered face was creased into a genuine smile.

"Hey Dad."

"There you are, sweetie." Eli pressed a kiss onto his daughter's forehead, then slowly lowered himself down into a nearby chair. "So Izzy's showing Gordon our teleporter, eh? They always did make a good team."

Alyx glanced at Barney. "That's not what I heard."

Eli chuckled. "Gordon might have picked up a few of Izzy's more... eccentric qualities during his time under him at MIT, but they work well together. Izzy brought his years of experience, and Gordon his ability to spot the obvious that most scientists have a hard time seeing." His smile turned a bit wiry. "Me included. I remember this one time-"

Barney leaned over and whispered into Alyx's ear. "Story time."

Alyx struggled not to laugh.

Eli continued on as if nothing had happened. "-I had been tackling with this project for over a week, when I received an in-house email that simply read 'align the output ratio'. I was floored. It had been so obvious. None of us ever took the step back to see it. The email had been sent by one Gordon Freeman, who I had only heard of in passing from Izzy, so I went to go meet this new associate. I found both him and Izzy watching some security officers' putting out a fire. That they had apparently just caused."

Alyx choked on her mirth.

Barney nodded. "That's actually how I meet Gordon. Putting out one of their fires."

The large machine across the room sparked once more, jumped to something flammable, and caught fire. There was a pop, and the unknown popping object exploded.

Kleiner dove for the floor, surprisingly spry for someone his age. Freeman scrambled for the (easily accessible) fire extinguisher.

Something whistled through the air, lodging itself into the wall between Alyx and Barney's heads.

Alyx blinked, sliding her eyes to rest on the smoldering piece of jagged metal piercing the hard concrete just inches from her ear. "I think I see what you were talking about, Barney."

Eli labored to his feet, surprisingly blithe about the burning mess in his laboratory, and put a comforting arm around her shoulders. "You get use to it, honey."

Gordon stumbled in front of the group of three, singed and disheveled, brandishing the fire extinguisher with easy familiarity. Behind him, Kleiner was lugging one of his own, beating back the fire with his glasses askew.

Gordon paused to straightening his own glasses, eerily mimicking his out-of-sight mentor. He pointed at the indistinguishable lump in the wall with his free hand. "Could we have that back?"

Barney burst out laughing.

14. Follow Freeman! Ice Cream

**Ice Cream**

_Summary: Alyx likes ice cream.

> _Rating: K

> _Disclaimer: Â©, Valve.

> _Characters: Gordon Freeman and Alyx Vance

> _More Notes: Not exactly what I was planning on posting next, but still some Gordon/Alyx for you, earthrise. Set in HL2: Episode 1, in the Evil Pit of Zombies and Darkness. I like this one. Uh... that's all._

"I like ice cream."

Alyx stated the phrase with a note of finality that left no room for argument.

The silence lingered for a moment afterwards, before Gordon slide his gaze off of the lightly barricaded door (the only entrance in or out of the small storage room they were holed up in for a short break from the oppressive darkness and constant stream of zombies) to rest on Alyx Vance's reclining figure. "Hm?"

"Ice cream." Alyx let her head roll forward, pistol held in limp hands with barrel pointed downward in between her knees. The lone lightbulb above her head bathed her in its sickly yellow. "My Dad and Dr. Kleiner made a little machine to make ice cream on my twenty-first birthday. Barney used his CP connections to gather the ingredients. It was chocolate."

That statement seemed important to her.

Gordon just shifted a bit upon his clutter perch.

"It was... good. I mean, real _good._ I had ice cream when I was younger, but I don't remember it being so..." She struggled with her words for a moment. "...so _good._ It was a great birthday."

Silence descended between them once more.

Alyx leaned her head back against the wall, staring up at the cracked ceiling. "I hate the Combine."

Dripping water echoed somewhere distantly.

"Alyx."

The young woman started.

Gordon used a gloved finger to push his glasses further up the bridge of his nose, not quite meeting Alyx's inquisitive stare. "Strawberry isn't bad either."

Alyx blinked, then quickly ducked her head to the side, tucking a loose strand of hair behind her ear.

Water dripped again.

"Maybe... maybe we can have ice cream together. You know. Later."

Gordon finally turned to directly face Alyx, and she could see the small smile tugging at the corner of his mouth even in the dim lighting. "We'll make a date out of it."

Alyx couldn't stop grinning for a full thirty minutes afterwards.

15. Follow Freeman! Colonel Cubbage?

**Colonel Cubbage?**

_Summary: Wait... what?

> _Rating: T

> _Disclaimer: Â©, Valve.

> _Characters: Gordon Freeman and Random Schmucks

> _More Notes: Um, didn't come out anything like I was planning. Don't mind the crapiness; was written in approximately fifteen minutes. It is t3h suxz. And I don't hate Cubbage, it just came out this way. I think he's kinda humorous. As for my fixation on Freeman's glasses? Well, I have glasses myself, so I just like putting those little glasses habits in my writing. I really am quite happy you guys approve of my Freeman characterization. I like him myself, and I wanted to share.

> _Oh, one more thing. Gordon doesn't interacted well with people when he's tired. Something I unfortunately figured out writing this... thing._

"Dr. Freeman, were you actually there when Colonel Cubbage took down the very first gunship ever?"_

"Frank, first off, you're a moron."

"But-"

"And second off, Odessa Cubbage is an idiot."

"Now that's just-"

"I refuse to call that ponce with his crooked mustache and ridiculous accent anything that even _vaguely_ resembles military rank."

"But _Ted-!_"

Gordon Freeman glanced between the two men, blandly nonplus. He was actually kind of wondering if he could somehow steal a bit of couch that they were hogging. It seemed that the quick nap he had been planning was going to be delayed.

Again.

He sighed, and kept his blank stare on a piece of wall between their arguing heads.

"Colonel Cabbage has done so _much_ for the Resistance, Ted!"

"Cabbage has done all of two things for this war â€" jack and shit."

There was a series of cracks in the plaster that resembled a simple quadratic formula. Gordon watched it slowly fall out of focus as his glasses slide bit by bit down the bridge of his nose.

"But I've heard that-"

"Exactly. You heard, Frank, you _heard._ But were you actually there?"

"Well, no, but..."

"There you go."

X would equal negative zero point five eight one one three and positive two point five eight one one three. Unless... that splotch was actually a four, and the chipped bit of plaster that was the two was blurred beyond existence by now... then X would just be negative four and positive one.

Why couldn't everything be as easy as math?

"...Why are you so angry? I just wanted to ask if-"

"Because he let my brother die! He just fucking sat in his stupid little basement with his maps and useless battle plans and did _nothing_ while my brother got fucking _slaughtered!_"

"..."

"..."

"...I-I didn't know..."

"Well now you know, so let's drop this, okay?"

Ted glanced away.

After a moment of tense silence, Frank nervously clear his throat.
"Ah... were you actually there, Dr. Freeman?"

Gordon's body jerked, blinking rapidly and hand going instinctively for the butt of his pistol. He stopped just as the tip of the barrel was clearing its holster.

Frank stared at him with wide eyes. Ted was watching cautiously from the corner of his own.

Wait... what?

"Uh... with Colonel- I mean... with Cubbage." Frank managed to cough timidly. "...Dr. Freeman?"

When did we start talking about Cubbage?

Gordon furrowed his brows slightly. "Sure, why not."

Frank burst into a sudden grin, all signs of uneasiness gone. "I knew the Colonel took it down!"

Ted exploded. "That son of a bitch did no such thing! I don't believe a word of it!" He paused, abruptly polite. "Uh, no offense Dr. Freeman."

Gordon blinked.

"It's still shit, no matter what Dr. Freeman says. And you, Frank, are still a moron!" Saying that, Ted stormed out.

Frank bounced to his feet. "This is great, Dr. Freeman! Thanks a lot. I gotta go tell Eric and Linda. They both owe me five bucks!" And then he too exited the room, whistling happily to himself.

Gordon was puzzled briefly, then wiped the whole thing from his mind, and opted instead to pass out on the newly freed couch.

16. Follow Freeman! Merry Christmas

"_**Merry Christmas, Mr. Freeman.**_"

_Summary: Gordon gets a visitor and a present.

> _Rating: K

> _Disclaimer: Â©, Valve.

> _Characters: Gordon Freeman and the G-Man

> _More Notes: Merry belated Christmas, everyone! And if you don't celebrate Christmas, then merry whatever you _do_ celebrate! I've been meaning to do a piece with G-Man in it for a while now, I think he's the only thing that can really rattled Freeman. And as for why I always put them in Black Mesa East when its most likely been ransacked, City 17's been blown up, and they'll probably never go back there again... eh, there's no where else I can really set these things. Call it AU if you want. Or... later on. Whatever._

"Merry Christmas, Mr. Freeman."

Gordon's eyes snapped open, hand going for the pistol on the small

nightstand at his cot-side. Raising up on one elbow, his aim was instantly on the head of the fuzzy figure perched upon the plastic chair across the room.

There was a briefcase on the floor at its side.

Gordon slowly rose to a seated position, covers pooling about his waist. He fumbled blindly for his glasses on the same nightstand, eyes and gun never wavering, and carefully slipped them on. The intruder's craggy features came into focus.

"Come now, Mr. Freeman, you didn't really think that your vortigaunt... friends could keep you away from me indefinitely, did you?"

Freeman's only response was the distinctive click as the safety was removed from his firearm.

"But I- digress." The man seemed unmindful of the danger he might (or might not) be in. "I come baring gifts. You are, after all, my most... useful... employee, and I would be remiss if I did not show my... appreciation."

The man lifted his small briefcase into his lap, opening it and removing a medium sized package, slightly larger then the palm of his hand. It was wrapped in red paper, with a perfect golden bow on top.

It was also noticeably taller then the briefcase was wide, but Gordon did not let the strange askew in the laws of physics distract him from the main threat.

The man placed the present on the ground in front of his feet, then snapped shut his briefcase. "I hope you use this to its fullest extent. But please be careful; it is quite expensive."

The man stood.

Gordon's finger tightened around the trigger.

"While we might have suffered a minor setback, don't think this excuses you from your job. I'll be sure to make good use of you again- soon." He straightened his tie, and gave a wan smile that was wholly unnaturally. "Till then, Mr. Freeman."

Briefcase in hand, the man opened the door and strolled out of the room.

For almost thirty seconds afterward, Gordon stared at the gapping doorway, tense and unmoving. Finally, the barrel of his gun dipped downward, and he almost seemed to deflated upon himself, taking deep shaky breathes. He gazed unseeingly at the pistol resting on the sheets between his now limp hands.

His eyes flickered to the left.

The present sat innocently on the ground, looking beyond real. Superimposed against the drab gray concrete. It's bow was perfect. Harmless.

Covers were thrown back, bare feet placed on the cold floor. The pistol now barely hung from the loose grip of his right hand, the left was used to sweep up the brightly wrapped gift without a second glance.

He stepped into the hallway. Glanced left, glanced right. As expected, no sign of the man could be seen. In fact, the hall was deserted, this early on Christmas morning.

Gordon chose left, and walked on.

A few minutes later, at one of many airlocked exits to the outside, the night guard looked up from his game of solitaire and blinked.

"Hello, Dr. Freeman."

Bare foot and bare chested, box laying on the flat of his upturned palm and pistol in plain sight, Gordon simply said, "Hullo, Erwin."

Erwin paused. "Is there something I can do for you, Dr. Freeman?"

Gordon cocked his head to the side, and actually looked as if he was giving the question deep thought. "May I go outside for a moment?"

"Uh..." Erwin swiveled his chair to the side, looking at one of his many monitors. "It snowed again last night, so..."

Gordon cocked an eyebrow.

"So... it's probably cold, what with the snow and all..." Erwin fidgeted with one of his cards, trying not to be obvious as he stared. "And you don't appear to be properly dressed. For the weather, that is."

"I'll only be a moment, Erwin."

Erwin looked at the box, then the pistol, and finally sighed. "Sure Doc, whatever you say."

A few button presses later, the full auto cycle was done and over with, and Freeman was deposited into the bitter cold of winter.

The weak morning sun was barely peeking over the horizon, glinting dimly on the freshly fallen snow. Pure white and a foot deep, Gordon stepped into it without hesitation.

He trudged past the deep surrounding rock face, heading towards the river shore, ignoring the biting chill like he ignored many other things. Need for sleep. Minor fractures. His breath puffed into the air. His skin was pale from cold.

He stopped where snow covered ground met snow covered ice, and lifted the present in front of his face. Bright green eyes analyzed the bright red wrapping, the perfect golden bow.

He drew back his arm and hurled the thing as far as he could onto the

frozen river.

It bounced once, then landed upright, bow undisturbed.

The gunshot was amazingly loud in the otherwise muted silence. The 9mm bullet tore through the package, sending it flying backwards. The next bullet caught it midair. The third just as it landed, flinging it into an open hole in the ice and down into the frigid water below.

Gordon turned his back and walked away.

17. Follow Freeman! Brand of Insanity Pt 2

Brand Of Insanity; Pt. 2****

_Summary: ...And some insanity just slaps you in the face.

> _Rating: K+

> _Disclaimer: Â©, Valve.

> _Characters: Overwatch squad members E349, E376, E324 & E357, and Gordon Freeman

> _More Notes: Operation: Blackie Shield was stolen without remorse from South Park. If they had previously stolen the idea from someone else, then I suppose I have inadvertently stolen it from them as well. And I love these guys. They crack me up._

"What's he doing now?"

E349 carefully peeked around the corner, hand gripping tight one of the many metallic walls within the Citadel. "I don't really... Uh, shooting energy orbs at the wall?" He ducked his head back into the safety of their enclave, looking at his two companions. "That's all he's been doing for the past few minutes."

"What, nothing... constructive?"

E349's hidden incredulous expression was clearly broadcasted through his tone of voice. "Do you _want_ him to be doing something constructive?"

"No, I just-"

"Cause something constructive for him usually involves killing _us_ and, and maybe anyone who happens to be _close_ to us at the time!"

"Dude, chill!" E324 cocked an eyebrow underneath his facemask. "I was just asking. It seemed a bit... odd. Isn't he suppose to be rescuing some... guy?"

"Don't say 'rescue'. Makes us sound bad."

"What am I _suppose_ to say, then?"

E349's radio crackled in the silence. An energy orb could be heard ricocheting off a wall behind them. "Fuck you, man."

"No, really-"

"What's he doing now?"

E376 had his whole entire upper body leaning out from their hiding cubby, managing to visibly gape even behind his helmet.

E349 exchanged a glance with E324, before pushing E376 out of the way. "He's still just throwing those balls around, like he's been doing for the past five minutes- oh."

E324 sidled closer, trying to nudge his way past E376. "'Oh' what? What's so- oh."

The three stared for a bit.

"He's rather good." E324 said, conversationally.

E349 sagged. "Yeah."

"I mean, I don't think I could have- I mean, that rebound was fantastic."

"It was, wasn't it." E349's voice was flat through the static of his comm.

"It went straight in that hole. One try."

"We're all going to die."

"Yeah, we are."

E349 took a step backwards, practically collapsing on the wall behind him. "He's going to take our heads off with an energy orb like he did Jim."

"Yeah, he is."

"E357." E376 piped up.

"Damnit Der- Gah! E376! Who the fuck cares! The guy out there apparently has a PHD in kicking our asses and we're about to have our heads removed from our bodies in a most violent and permanent way!"

E349 took a deep breath. The other two took that time to carefully (and most importantly, discreetly) back away from their squad mate, while at the same time staying out of sight of the orange-clad figure in the other room.

"Okay. Okay, okay. We need a plan. Or a miracle. Or both. Preferably both. What can we..." His helmet tilted to the right, settling on the decapitated corpse laying a few feet away from their small huddle. "I... have a plan."

"Oh?" E324's response was packed with total caution.

"Operation: Blackie Shield." And then E349 outlined exactly what Operation: Blackie Shield entailed.

There was a moment of silence. Then...

"E357 wasn't black."

"Who the _fuck-_ Wait, he wasn't?"

E324 snorted. "Dude, who would name their black baby 'Jim'? That's just cruel."

"I would."

Almost as one, the three of them swiveled their heads towards the opening of their enclave.

Gordon Freeman hefted his gravity gun in his right hand, using his left to give them a small wave.

Three plasma guns trained on the intruder.

The physicist stared at them over the top of his glasses like an interesting science experiment.

There was a collective holding of one's breath.

E349 cleared his throat nervously. "Uh... hi?"

"Hullo." Freeman pushed his glasses up with the tip of a finger. "Would you care to join the Resistance?"

E324 cringed.

E376 cringed.

E349 cringed... then paused.

"Wait... what?"

18. Follow Freeman! New Year

"_**...and welcome to another year."*_

_Summary: New Year's party doesn't end very well for Gordon.

> _Rating: K+

> _Disclaimer: Â©, Valve.

> _Characters: Gordon Freeman and G-Man

> _More Notes: I got a PM from Obsidian Thirteen to 'freaking update Follow Freeman', so... I did. Thanks for the push! This is actually the thing I was attempting to write before I got writers block and quit for a few months. G-Man is the hardest character for me, being all creepifying, and the only thing Gordon wants to do when he gets in his presence is shoot him. A lot._

New Year.

The spattering of humanity celebrated it like a prize hard earned and hard won. It was a joyful time for the gathered resistance, perhaps even more so than the recently passed Christmas. Smiles came easier, people laughed harder. They survived another year.

Everyone was happy, for the moment.

He was glad for them.

Gordon sipped at his drink quietly, hardly touched and going warm, surveying the crowded room over the rim of his cup. Ten minutes until the new year officially began, and if anything, the four hour party was picking up steam rather than loosing it the closer it got to midnight.

Taking one last drink, Gordon set the mostly filled cup amongst a small herd of similar barely emptied ones upon a nearby table with a dull thud. A half-eaten cake, titled and ramshackled, stood forlornly surrounded by already consumed finger foods. A stray chip here, a slightly wilted vegetable there. A blunted knife, trailing a line of crumbs back to its point of origin, rested at the edge of the table, taking up residence beside the collection of abandoned beverages.

Gordon absently ghosted his fingers along its nigh useless edge, resting them on the tip of the handle. He glanced from exit to exit through the throng of milling people. A man nearby snorted, then laughed out loud fully. After a few moments, his lady companion joined in.

"Welcome to another year, Mr. Freeman."

Gordon turned-

A man was at his side now, briefcase held in one bony hand. A man that most assuredly hadn't been there a mere few seconds ago.

-silently cursing his lack of firearm ("It's a party Gordon, you can't bring a gun to a party!") even as his hand closed around the handle of the knife-

"Come now, Mr. Freeman..."

-and stopped.

Gordon let his eyes flicked down to where the man was very deliberately not touching his arm, skeletal fingers hovering just centimeters above the crook of his elbow. Even through the weave of his sweater, the joint felt cold.

"...you wouldn't want to make a scene, now would... you?"

The scientist's returning glare stated quite firmly that yes, he most definitely wouldn't mind making a scene all over the man's face, as long as that particular scene involved a great deal of blood.

The man tsk'ed, sounding both dry and sharp. "You... disappoint me. I had hoped..." He sighed, fingers retracting a few inches. "I gave you a present, given in good faith and not received in kind. It was only, after all, a box of chocolates, Mr. Freeman. An expensive one, to be sure, but just that."

"Box..."

Gordon knew, knew, that what he had been given hadn't been an expensive box of chocolates, but he also knew, without a doubt, that

if he were to go and dredge it up from the bottom of the still-frozen river, _it would be and always would have been a box of chocolates._

"...of chocolates." He heard himself repeat, hollowly. The analytical part of his mind gibbered away.

Something clicked: reality sliding into place or his mind cracking slightly to accommodate this new truth.

Synchronized movement caught his eye. All around the room, vortigaunt heads rose, large eyes landing unerringly on their secluded corner.

Gordon didn't blink, and not once did he let his gaze wander from the man at his side.

The man stared back, an almost smile raising the corners of his thin lips. "Unfortunately, it seems I can no longer continue leaving you with the illusion of freewill."

Gordon pivoted, hand sweeping up the knife while his other forearm pushed up and into the man's throat. The man's back slammed into the wall behind them, suitcase clattering to the floor. In a moment of absurdity as his knife hand came up and around, Gordon was immensely glad for the barrier his long sleeve provided against the man's skin. He also knew that, for the first time since he had picked up a gun, he _wanted to see blood._

Time stopped.

The tip of the knife hung barely half an inch away from the man's eyeball.

Gordon's breath was harsh and ragged in his own ears, strained and strung out. The world was a hushed silence of inactivity. In frustration, in self preservation, in sheer anger, Gordon _pushed._

The tip of the knife wavered-

And the man neatly sidestepped out of Freeman's choke hold, fastidiously straightening his mussed tie. "Really, Mr. Freeman, you leave me with no other choice and I'm a very busy man."

Vortigaunts flowed through the frozen crowd, converging on their spot.

Grasping the handle of his dropped suitcase, the man rose-

-and they both disappeared.

The resistance found Gordon Freeman later, a week displaced and damn near frozen to death by the river's edge.

19. Follow Freeman! Here Is Your Cake

**Congratulations! Here Is Your Cake.**

_Summary: Aperture Science wants to give Gordon cake.
> _Rating: K
> _Disclaimer: Â©, Valve.
> _Characters: Gordon Freeman, Barney Calhoun, and Isaac Kleiner

> _More Notes: OhmahGAWD Episode Two! I can't even _begin_... I just can't. I was a little saddened by the distinct lack of Barney, but-! I'll live. Anywho, and Portal! I think I just about died laughing at the ending credits song to Portal. Aperture Science cracks me up. And why Wisconsin? Who knows? Not me._

_Dear Mr. Gordon Freeman, _

_Congratulations! _

_After a thorough review of your resume and various scientific achievements, you have been chosen to become the newest esteemed associate of the Aperture Science, Inc. Please come visit us at our base offices at 7496 Philino Drive in Greenland, Wisconsin. We look forward to throwing a welcoming party. Be sure not to miss out on the cake! _

_For more information, please call... _

Gordon glanced up from the letter.

Dr. Kleiner looked _appalled._ "Why those conniving little-" The older scientist cut off, anger momentarily overcoming his vocabulary. "They're trying to steal our employees right out from underneath us!"

Barney snatched the letter away from Gordon's hands. Elbow planted on the cafeteria tabletop, cheek resting on a balled up fist, Barney quickly scanned over the rest of the rather lengthy letter that Gordon hadn't read to them aloud. "...aren't they suppose to call you a doctor? That's just insulting."

Gordon watched on, vaguely bemused. "At least they pay better."

Kleiner went from appalled to horrified. "Not even in _jest_, Gordon!"

Freeman blinked.

"Seriously. The Doc is right, Doc." Even Barney looked solemn, pushing away the stack of papers with only the tip of his index finger as if it was contaminated. "Those Aperture Science guys are bad news. I've heard stories about that place that'll make your toes curl."

Gordon stared at the letter that now sat in the middle of the three men. "I didn't even send my resume to them."

Barney snorted, leaning back in his chair and folding his arms roughly across his chest. "Now _that_ is the part that bothers me. How'd they get a hold of it anyway?"

Kleiner fiddled with the rim of his thick glasses. "I think the more appropriate question, Barney, would be 'why'?"

They all stared at the letter, which somehow was managing to look innocently menacing.

"...Huh." Gordon concluded, and took a bite out of his apple.

"What, that's it?" Barney knew his physicist friend well enough to know what Gordon's 'huh' had signified. "You're not curious? Not even going to give them a call?"

Freeman shrugged. "No."

Barney sighed, long and deep. "You're an odd one, Gordon."

Dr. Kleiner, despite himself, nodded in agreement.

Gordon simply cocked an eyebrow at them both and took another bite out of his apple.

End
file.